

REMARKS

Applicants hereby request further consideration of the application in view of the amendments above and the comments that follow.

Applicants respectfully request entry of the foregoing amendments, which place the present application in condition for allowance or in better form for appeal.

Information Disclosure Statement

Per the Examiner's request, Applicants submit herewith a duplicate copy of the form PTO-1449 that accompanied Applicants' Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) filed on October 30, 2000 for acknowledgment by the Examiner.

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-24, 26-34 and 40-63 as presented in Applicants' Response dated June 18, 2003 are pending in the application. Per the Advisory Action, the amendments as presented in Applicants' Response dated October 16, 2003 have not been entered.

Claims 1-9, 14, 16-19, 21-24, 26-30, 32, 33, 40-50 and 63 stand rejected. Claims 1-3, 21, 24, 26-28, 32 and 40-42 stand rejected under Section 102 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,140,746 to Debbaut¹ (Debbaut '746). Claims 4-8, 29, 33, 44, 45 and 49 stand rejected under Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over Debbaut '746 in view of Applicant's Admitted Prior Art (AAPA). Claims 9, 14, 16-19, 21, 30, 46-48, 50 and 63 stand rejected under Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over Debbaut '746 in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,821,460 to Marmy (Marmy). Claims 22, 23, 26 and 43 stand rejected under Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over Debbaut '746.

Claims 10-13, 15, 20, 31 and 51 stand objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Claims 34 and 52-62 have been allowed.

¹ The Action states that the rejection is in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,634,207 to Debbaut. However, it is clear from the elements cited by the Action in support of the rejection that U.S. Patent No. 5,140,746 is intended.

In re: Fitzgerald et al.
Serial No.: 09/660,062
Filed: September 12, 2000
Page 12

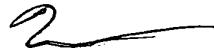
The Claims as Amended Are Clearly
in Condition for Allowance

The Advisory Action indicates that Claims 34 and 52-62 have been allowed. All of the remaining claims as now amended depend from one of Claims 52-62. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims are clearly in condition for allowance, and that the present amendments do not raise any new issues that would require further consideration and/or search.

CONCLUSION

Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance and the same is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner have any matters outstanding of resolution, he is encouraged to telephone the undersigned at 919-854-1400 for expeditious handling.

Respectfully submitted,



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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on December 5, 2003.

Katie A. Chung

